

# ROMANOS'S USE OF GREEK PATRISTIC SOURCES

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**A**N ENQUIRY CONCERNING the incidence and function of Greek patristic sources in Romanos's work must deal with two different problems:

The literary genre cultivated by Romanos and the relationship between that genre and previous patristic tradition: is the *kontakion* absolutely different from eastern Christian homiletic literature? And, accordingly, is Romanos indebted to the patristic tradition for content or for style?

The nature of authors and texts appropriate for a real synoptic comparison with Romanos: which and how many of those whom we generally call "Greek Fathers" are earlier than Romanos? Which and how many are instead contemporary or later, and therefore responsible for the subsequent remaking of one or more of Romanos's sources—or of Romanos himself? And how many of the texts that have reached us in Greek and under the name of an orthodox author were instead the work of a Syriac-writing author whom Romanos assimilated in his homeland during his early years?

Only after a clarification of the terms of both problems will it be possible to consider the elements of Romanos's work that, in varying degrees, refer directly or indirectly to patristic roots.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, quotations from Romanos's work will be from Constantine Trypanis's Oxford edition: *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica*, ed. P. Maas and C. A. Trypanis, vol. 1, *Cantica genuina* (Oxford, 1963; repr. New York, 1997). The number of the *kontakion* will be in boldface type, followed by the numbers of the strophe and verse. The first citation of each *kontakion* will give the equivalent number in the French edition: Romanos le Mélode, *Hymnes*, ed. and trans. J. Grosdidier de Matons, 5 vols., SC 99, 110, 114, 128, 283 (Paris, 1964–81). With its substantial commentary, this edition has paved the way for much research on the work of our author, and for this study as well. Further material is now found in the most recent German edition: Romanos Melodos, *Die Hymnen*, ed. and trans. J. Koder, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 2005–6). I shall also use some items drawn from the Italian edition of Romanos: Romano il Melodo, *Cantici*, ed. R. Maisano, 2 vols. (Turin, 2002). Reflections about Romanos as a writer that began there are continued in this paper.

## 1. Relationship Between the *Kontakion* as a Literary Genre and Greek Christian Homiletic Literature

From a structural point of view, the distinction between rhythmical Christian homilies and strophic series in *kontakia* is clear. But the process of choosing and using words displayed by the preachers and by the Melode is not so clearly distinct. Although modern scholarship usually classifies Romanos as a "poet" and writers of homilies as "orators," the distinction between their respective languages is not so clear. This is not the place to discuss poetical language and its features, so we shall restrict ourselves to the comment that, if we assume *synthesis* and *implicitness* as specific characteristics of poetic language and, as a consequence, *analysis* and *explicitness* as specific characteristics of prose, it becomes difficult to place the Melode and the writers of rhythmic homilies in two entirely different categories.<sup>2</sup> Although Romanos is in fact etymologically a "poet," his vocabulary is seldom poetic (that is, implicit, allusive, shifted), and his levels of style are often not poetic (i.e., marked by synthesis). The hymnographer's rhythm and phonic devices are intended to elevate speech in relation to the subject; their primary purpose, though, is not to produce an artistic composition but to provide assistance to the listeners' and readers' attention and memory retention.

In this sense, sermons written by Greek Church Fathers and declaimed from the pulpit during solemn ceremonies often resemble prose hymns. They do not follow a strict metrical pattern, but they display a rhythm and they use recurring formal devices. Just one example will be quoted here. Drawn from a work by John Chrysostom of secure attribution and dating, it was surely well known to Romanos and his public:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For the distinction between poetic and prose language here suggested I owe much to my colleague and friend Giovanni Cerri, professor of Greek literature at the Università di Roma Tre.

<sup>3</sup> *Homiliae in 1 Cor.* 7:7 = PG 61:63, 46–58 (I have rearranged the text in verse form to highlight the rhythm and phonic devices).

Τί ποτε τοῦτό ἐστι;  
 πάντες οἱ τὴν οἰκουμένην οἰκοῦντες ἡπάτηνται,  
 καὶ σοφισταὶ καὶ ῥήτορες,  
 καὶ φιλόσοφοι καὶ συγγραφεῖς,  
 οἳ τε παρόντες οἳ τε πρὸ τούτου γενόμενοι,  
 οἱ περὶ Πυθαγόραν καὶ Πλάτωνα,  
 καὶ στρατηγοὶ καὶ ὑπατοὶ καὶ βασιλεῖς,  
 καὶ οἱ τῶν πόλεων ἐξ ἀρχῆς πολῖται καὶ οἰκισταί,  
 καὶ βάρβαροι καὶ Ἕλληνες;  
 καὶ οἱ δώδεκα ἀλιεῖς καὶ σκηνοποιοὶ καὶ τελῶναι  
 πάντων ἐκείνων εἰσὶ σοφώτεροι;  
 καὶ τίς ἂν ταῦτα ἀνάσχοιτο;  
 Ἄλλ' ὅμως οὐκ εἶπον ταῦτα, οὐκ ἐνενόησαν,  
 ἀλλ' ἠνέσχοντο,  
 καὶ ἔγνωσαν ὅτι πάντων ἦσαν σοφώτεροι·  
 διὸ καὶ πάντων ἐκράτησαν.

Chrysostom's formal devices (anaphora, rhythmical line, assonance) are not very different from those of Romanos, and the same remark can be made about their lexical choices.<sup>4</sup> The only difference—owed, nevertheless, not to an artistic choice, but to functional needs—consists in the recurrence of stress sequences in kontakia, which are bound by musical and strophic structure.

The recourse to poetic rhythm in prose texts was once confined to emphatic passages (e.g., in the New Testament, 1 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Timothy 4:7), but in the Fathers' sermons this phenomenon has a tendency to spread.<sup>5</sup> Such a combination of prose and verse resulted in an increasing rapprochement of homiletic genre to hymnography in late antiquity in the East, but also an unconscious reverse process later on, when the Byzantines themselves no longer had access to the musical accompaniment and so they considered kontakia by the same standard as prose works.<sup>6</sup> From this point of

4 To allow a synoptic comparison with Romanos, I provide here a passage from the Holy Apostles kontakion (31.14.3–6) that closely resembles the text just quoted:

Πόθεν ἡμῖν ἡ φωνὴ καὶ ἡ γλῶσσα πρὸς πάντας λαλεῖν;  
 Ἰσχὺν δὲ τίς ἡμῖν δώσει ἀντιστῆναι λαοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἔθνεσιν;  
 Ἀγράμματοι καὶ ἀπαιδευτοὶ, ἀλιεῖς ἀσθενεῖς ὡς προσέταξας  
 ὁ μόνος γινώσκων τὰ ἐγκάρδια.

5 See E. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart, 1915), app. I.

6 See K. Krumbacher, *Miscellen zu Romanos*, AbhMünch, Hist.Kl. 24, no. 3 (Munich, 1909), 114; S. S. Averincev, *L'anima e lo specchio: L'universo della poetica bizantina* (Bologna, 1988), 27: "Romano il Melodo, insigne poeta del VI secolo, poteva non sapere di scrivere in versi. In ogni caso egli non avrebbe saputo dire in quale sistema di versificazione componeva."

view we shall recognize Romanos's principal and most evident indebtedness to the Church Fathers precisely in his choice of clear and analytical language in a rhythmic and strophic context.

Certainly such a recognition is not made easier by the image of Romanos that has accompanied his fame since the beginning. The well-known hagiographical account concerning his vocation suggests an image that is not only idealized, as demanded by the literary genre, but also misleading for modern readers:<sup>7</sup>

Καταλαβὼν δὲ τὴν Κωνσταντινούπολιν ἐν τοῖς χρόνοις Ἀναστασίου τοῦ βασιλέως, κατέμενεν ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῆς ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου τῷ ἐν τοῖς Κύρου, ἐν ᾧ καὶ τὸ χάρισμα τῆς συντάξεως τῶν κοντακίων ἔλαβεν, ἐπιφανείσης αὐτῷ τῆς ἁγίας Θεοτόκου κατ' ὄναρ κατὰ τὴν ἐσπέραν τῆς Χριστοῦ γεννήσεως καὶ τόμον χάρτου ἐπιδούσης καὶ κελευσάσης αὐτὸν καταφαγεῖν· οὐ μετὰ τὴν κατάποσιν εὐθέως ἐξυπνος γενόμενος, ἀναβὰς ἐν τῷ ἄμβωνι ἤρξατο ἐκφωνεῖν καὶ λίαν ἐμμελῶς ψάλλειν· "ἡ παρθένος σήμερον τὸν ὑπερούσιον τίκτει."

After he reached Constantinople at the time of emperor Anastasios, he lived in the sanctuary of the very holy Mother of God in Kyros's quarter, where he also received the gift of composing kontakia, when the holy Mother of God appeared to him in a dream on Christmas Eve and gave him a roll of papyrus ordering him to swallow it. After eating it he suddenly woke up, went up to the pulpit and started declaiming and singing very harmoniously: "Today the Virgin gives birth to the supersubstantial one."

The hagiographer stresses the sweetness of Romanos's song by using two words (ἐμμελῶς and ψάλλειν) that focus the reader's attention on this aspect of his composition. Modern readers, on the other hand, are captivated by the quotation of the Melode's best-known incipit and are led to concentrate their attention even more on the lyrical color of the episode. The technical meaning of the word ἐκφωνεῖν ("pronounce") is overlooked. But after reading the kontakion it is impossible to maintain the first impression that the hagiographical text just quoted may evoke. The first Christmas kontakion provides a sequence of narrative, didactic, and exhortatory cues in an analytical and lively language; these cues determine

7 Greek text from the *Synaxarium*, edited by H. Delehay, *Propylaeum ad AASS Novembris* (Brussels, 1902); English translation is mine.

not only the character of the text but also its carrying structure. We notice the same phenomenon in every kontakion ascribed to Romanos, without exception. In every page we can recognize references to East Christian homiletic praxis.

For this reason we can say that an examination of the literary form of Romanos's oeuvre reveals one of the most noteworthy signs of patristic influence on it, as we shall see later on (§4).

## 2. Aspects of Patristic Tradition Acknowledged by Romanos

The second problem results from an attempt to delineate the Greek background of most of the patristic tradition acknowledged by Romanos in choosing and working out his topics. It is not my task here to discuss the question of the corpus usually called "Ephraem Graecus": but the vagueness of the label "Greek Fathers" with regard to the geographical locale and the time of our author concerns not only Ephrem the Syrian but most of the recognized or recognizable models for Romanos—unless we choose to adopt a strictly technical label, automatically extending the designation "Greek" to any author whose work has come down to us in the Greek language. But this would be to avoid the problem, not to solve it.

Through some examples we aim to demonstrate how difficult—and sometimes impossible—it is to draw a clear distinction between Romanos's debt to Greek Fathers and his debt to Syriac Fathers.

The kontakion of the Sinful Woman (10 M.–Tr. = 15 Gr. de M.) is significant. We know that Ephrem the Syrian wrote a homily (*Serm.* 4) on the anointing at Bethany.<sup>8</sup> In that homily we find the reconstruction of a dialogue between the woman and the perfumer, omitted by the Gospel but essential in Romanos's kontakion. It is therefore likely that the Melode was acquainted with Ephrem's text.<sup>9</sup> A pseudo-Chrysostomic homily, Εἰς τὴν

πόρνην καὶ τὸν Φαρισαῖον (*In meretricem et Pharisaicum* = PG 59:531–36), that shows in its turn some coincidences with Romanos's kontakion, has been regarded as later. But it has also been assumed that the text handed down under Chrysostom's name is in fact a work written by Severianos of Gabala (fl. early 5th c.). So one cannot overlook the following objection: if this hypothesis were proved, Severianos would be as likely as Ephrem to be one of Romanos's sources.<sup>10</sup>

Romanos's first kontakion on the Raising of Lazarus (14 M.–Tr. = 26 Gr. de M.) contains a grotesque dialogue between Hades and Thanatos.<sup>11</sup> There existed in Syria a homiletic tradition concerning the effects in hell of Jesus' victory over Death. Echoes of this tradition are found in Ephrem the Syrian,<sup>12</sup> a possible direct source of Romanos. But they are also found in a group of pseudonymous homilies handed down in Greek under the names of "Eusebios of Alexandria" (PG 86:384–406, 509–36), John Chrysostom (PG 62:721–25, 771–80), and Epiphanius (PG 43:440–64). These texts have been ascribed to sixth- or seventh-century Syriac writers—and therefore later than Romanos.<sup>13</sup> But at least one of these sermons is ascribed in some manuscripts to Proklos of Constantinople, who lived about one century earlier than Romanos and is surely one of the Melode's *auctores* in other kontakia. If the manuscript attribution is correct (a comparison with other works of Proklos seems to strengthen the hypothesis), it becomes difficult to ascertain whether Romanos has borrowed from Ephrem, Proklos, or yet another writer.

With regard to the first kontakion on the Annunciation (36 M.–Tr. = 9 Gr. de M.) we note that Romanos, working out the Gospel story in a very free manner and dramatizing the theological subject, resembles the author of a pseudo-Chrysostomic homily on the same

8 *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones*, ed. E. Beck, CSCO 311 (Louvain, 1970), 2:78–87 (Syriac text); CSCO 312, 2:99–109 (German translation); ed. of Greek text I. S. Assemani, *Sancti Patris nostri Ephraem Syri Opera omnia quae extant Graece, Syriace, Latine ad mss. codices Vaticanos*, 1–6 (Rome, 1732–46), 2:297–306.

9 This sermon was read for a long time in many countries; Coptic, Arabic, and Slavonic translations of it are known.

10 In any case, it seems more likely that the pseudo-Chrysostomic text is a reworking of Romanos's kontakion, as proved by the remark that, of the eighteen letters forming Romanos's acrostic, ten are also found, at the appropriate places, in the prose text: see R. J. Schork, *Sacred Song from the Byzantine Pulpit: Romanos the Melodist* (Gainesville, FL, 1995), 20–21.

11 The other kontakia with such dialogues are 21–22 and 25–28.

12 See J. Teixidor, "La descente aux Enfers chez saint Ephrem," *OrSyri* 6 (1961): 25–40.

13 See F. Nau, "Notes sur diverses homélies pseudépigraphiques," *ROC* 13 (1908): 433–34; H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (Munich, 1959), 400–401. In this case again Schork (*Sacred Song*, 25–26) considers many of these pseudonymous homilies as later prose remakes of kontakia of Romanos.

topic (*In annunciationem Deiparae* = PG 60:755–60). Some modern scholars have ascribed this homily either to Proklos, according to manuscript attribution, or to an unknown writer, later than the fifth century, who may have turned an earlier poem into prose.<sup>14</sup> Besides, we know that Proklos wrote a great panegyric of the Mother of God (*Homilia* [*Hom.*] 6 = PG 65:721–57), only the first section of which is perhaps authentic, whereas the second section is the work of a later author; it is noteworthy that Proklos's text, like Romanos's kontakion, also echoes Mary's cult in the Syriac Church.<sup>15</sup>

With regard to Romanos's kontakion on Abraham and Isaac (41 M.–Tr. = 3 Gr. de M.), we note that there are many homiletic texts on this subject in Greek: for example, Basil of Seleukeia (*Oratio* [*Or.*] 7 = PG 85:101–12), Gregory of Nyssa (*De deitate Filii et Spiritus Sancti* = PG 46:553–76), Ephrem the Syrian under the name of Chrysostom (*In Abraham et Isaac* [*Abr. et Is.*] = PG 56:537–42 = Mercati, 1:231–32), Pseudo-Chrysostom (*Sermo contra theatra* = PG 56:541–54), John Chrysostom (*De Lazaro* 6 = PG 48:1017–26; *De beato Abraham* = PG 50:737–46; *Homilia in Genesis* [*Hom. in Gen.*] 47 = PG 54:428–34), and Cyril of Alexandria (*Glaphyra in Pentateuchum* [*Glaph. in Pent.*] = PG 69:137–48). Ephrem and Gregory display a closer connection with Romanos, while the others exhibit a vague resemblance. But this subject is also common in the Syriac-speaking homiletic tradition,<sup>16</sup> so that Romanos's debt to each tradition remains unspecified. We note particularly at 41.7.6 a reference to an angel announcing Isaac's birth to Abraham. We know that according to the Scripture, God himself had announced Isaac's birth, but Romanos needed a parallel with the Annunciation—and therefore between Isaac and Jesus. In this case Romanos's source is patristic rather than biblical, and we can identify it with Pseudo-Chrysostom (*Abr. et Is.* = PG 56:538), that is, the Greek Ephrem.

The long kontakion on the patriarch Joseph (43 M.–Tr. = 5 Gr. de M.) seems to be modeled on an exist-

ing homiletic or poetic source. Such a text may have been written in Greek, like the pseudo-Chrysostomic sermon on the same subject, published in PG 56:587–90 and ascribed some time ago to an anonymous author who wrote around the end of the fourth century.<sup>17</sup> The sermon has also been assigned to the patriarch Nestorius, while yet others think that the pseudo-Chrysostomic homily represents an example of a prose paraphrase derived from Romanos's corpus. But one cannot rule out that Romanos may have used a Syriac text similar to the long poem concerning the same subject that is preserved under Ephrem's name (Lamy 3:231–639).<sup>18</sup> Besides, the Melode's composition shows a close relationship with Basil of Seleukeia's *Or.* 8, as well as with Ephrem's poem, and there are also some connections with John Chrysostom's homilies on Genesis, which were well known in Byzantium (PG 53–54).

Our last example of the complicated relationship among Syriac tradition, Byzantine tradition, and Romanos's literary production—the kontakion on Elijah (45 M.–Tr. = 7 Gr. de M.)—is well known and studied.<sup>19</sup> Two texts ascribed to Ephrem concern the prophet: his exegesis of 1 Kings (1:488–93 Ass.) and one of the best-known poems of the Greek Ephrem (2:312–321 Ass. = 1.1:43–83 Mercati).<sup>20</sup> Basil of Seleukeia's *Or.* 11, derived from this poem (PG 85:147–58), is Romanos's main model. From the Melode was drawn in turn a pseudo-Chrysostomic sermon, *In prophetam Eliam* (PG 56:583–86). Before Romanos, and independently of Basil of Seleukeia, an anonymous melode dealt with the same subject in a kontakion of which only seven strophes survive (ed. Pitra, *Analecta Sacra*, 1:293–96). Grosdidier de Matons has noticed that the example just mentioned demonstrates well the fruitful relationship linking the liturgical poetry and homilies of Syria and Byzantium during late antiquity: a Syriac subject, initially exegetical (Ephrem), was known in the Byzantine milieu in the form of a *mēmra*, perhaps through the mediation of a Syriac metrical homily (Ephraem Graecus); then it was turned into a prose

14 See Grosdidier's edition (n. 1 above), 2, 14; B. Marx, *Procliana: Untersuchungen über den homiletischen Nachlass des Patriarchen Proklos von Konstantinopel* (Münster i. W., 1940), n. 73, pp. 68–69; CPG 2, no. 4628, p. 579.

15 A prominent difference between Romanos and his possible Syriac forerunners and models consists in the favorable presentation of Joseph's character: see E. J. Wellesz's review of Grosdidier de Matons's edition of Romanos, *JTS* 20 (1969): 657–66 (at 664).

16 See S. P. Brock, "Two Syriac Verse Homilies on the Binding of Isaac," *Le Muséon* 99 (1986): 61–129.

17 S. J. Voicu, "Trentatré omelie pseudocrisostomiche," *Lexicon philosophicum* 2 (1986): 73–141.

18 *Sancti Ephraem Syri Hymni et sermones*, ed. T. J. Lamy, 4 vols. (Mechliniae, 1881–1902).

19 J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode et les origines de la poésie religieuse à Byzance* (Paris, 1977) 20–21 and notes.

20 Ass. = Assemani ed. (n. 8 above). Mercati = S. G. Mercati, ed., *S. Ephraem Syri opera: textum Syriacum Graecum Latinum ad fidem codicum recensuit* (Rome, 1915).

homily (Basil of Seleukeia) that gave the theme for a *kontakion* (Romanos), reworked in its turn into a homily (Pseudo-Chrysostom).

### 3. The Role of the Greek Fathers in Romanos's Theme Development

Taking into account the assumptions and cautionary remarks mentioned above, we can now review the evidence for patristic influence in Romanos's work. We shall first recall Romanos's use of themes that were typical in patristic catechesis and homiletics as an embellishment and adaptation of biblical material (§3); then we shall discuss the literary function of patristic language in the Melode's work (§4). Such a review, of course, makes no claim to exhaustive coverage: it is offered as a summary of previous research and as an inventory that may be useful for further enquiries and evaluations.

A meaningful series of subjects that are particular to the Eastern Greek Fathers marks the set of *kontakia* concerning Jesus' life. Many of them have already been studied (the Nativity, the Massacre of the Innocents, the Presentation in the Temple, the Epiphany):<sup>21</sup> some further possible—and, in any case, useful—echoes deserve to be mentioned here.

The *kontakion* on the Man Possessed by Demons (11 M.–Tr. = 22 Gr. de M.) draws not only the subject but also its treatment from Basil of Seleukeia's *Or.* 23 (PG 85:269–77).<sup>22</sup>

The *kontakion* on the Woman with an Issue of Blood (12 M.–Tr. = 23 Gr. de M.) contains some exegetical suggestions found in a pseudo-Chrysostomic homily on the same subject (*In principium indictionis* = PG 59:575–78) ascribed by Benedikt Marx to Proklos.<sup>23</sup> Romanos's direct dependence on this text cannot be proved, so it is possible that they both depend on a common source.

The theme of the *kontakion* on the Multiplication

of Loaves (13 M.–Tr. = 24 Gr. de M.) is also treated by Basil of Seleukeia, *Or.* 33. Romanos seems to know it directly.

In the *kontakion* on the Entry into Jerusalem (16 M.–Tr. = 32 Gr. de M.) Romanos is linked with Greek tradition in stressing Jesus's kingship (we know that the Latin tradition focuses rather on the forthcoming Passion). One should also note that there are many Greek patristic texts on this theme, a number of which are ascribed to authors well known to Romanos.<sup>24</sup>

The theme of the *kontakion* on Judas (17 M.–Tr. = 33 Gr. de M.) was typical of a large group of homilies. Echoes in Romanos's text are occasional: singling out possible direct descent is once more compromised by the uncertain attributions and, accordingly, interdependences.<sup>25</sup>

The picture presented by the great *kontakia* on Old Testament stories and characters is more complex and multifaceted. In some cases the manuscript tradition shows that these texts did not circulate in Byzantium as widely as did those on the person of Christ. Nevertheless, they are texts that often date back to the early years of the Melode's activity, and therefore they represent meaningful stages in Romanos's training and growth as a writer.<sup>26</sup>

With regard to the *kontakion* on Noah (40 M.–Tr. = 2 Gr. de M.), we should note that there are many patristic texts on the Flood, but other hymns on this subject are not known.<sup>27</sup> Some homilies have motifs that are found also in Romanos. At 40.7.1ff., for instance, the Melode invents a discussion between Abraham and Sarah that in the following strophes is reported as if it really occurred: the dialogue between the two characters is found in two

24 Among homilies *In ramos Palmarum* we mention especially those ascribed to Methodios of Olympos (PG 18:384–97), Pseudo-Chrysostom (PG 59:703–8; 61:715–20, ascribed to Proklos in some manuscripts), Cyril of Alexandria (PG 77:1049–72), and Proklos of Constantinople (PG 65:771–77).

25 Pseudo-Athanasios (= Basil of Seleukeia), *In prodicionem Iudae* = PG 28:1048–54; John Chrysostom, *De prodicione Iudae* = PG 49:373–92; 50:715–20 (perhaps to be ascribed to Proklos); Pseudo-Chrysostom, *In prodicionem Servatoris* = PG 59:713–20; idem, *In latronem* = PG 59:719–22; idem, *In prodicionem Iudae* = PG 61:687–90.

26 In these *kontakia* we find evidence that this is early work: stiffness in style, an archaic form of the acrostic, lack of relationship between refrain and strophe. In the *kontakion* on Abraham and Isaac (41.1.1) we also find an autobiographical allusion: "Though I am young, I wish to imitate you, Abraham."

27 We mention six sermons of John Chrysostom (*Homiliae in Genesim* 24–29 = PG 53:206–73) and two of Basil of Seleukeia (*Or.* 5–6 = PG 85:76–101); see P. van Sichem, "L'hymne sur Noë de Romanos le Mélode: Contribution à l'étude des sources," *Επ.Ετ.Βυζ.Σπ.* 36 (1968): 27–36.

21 For these I refer to the introductions in the French, Italian, and German editions cited above in n. 1.

22 See P. Maas, "Das Kontakion: Mit einem Exkurs über Romanos und Basileios von Seleukeia," *BZ* 19 (1910): 300–302.

23 See Marx, *Procliana* (n. 14 above), n. 54, pp. 59–60; cf. *CPG* 2, no. 4586, p. 568.

Chrysostomic texts (*Homilia in beatum Abraham* 1 = PG 50:737–39; *Homilia de Abraham* 4 = PG 56:556–59) and in Basil of Seleukeia *Or.* 7.2 (= PG 85:105–12). At 40.10.8 the patriarch's claustrophobic situation during the flood is mentioned (ὥσπερ ἐκ τάφου σοῦ με καλοῦντος): we can find the same simile in a well-known text of John Chrysostom (*Homilia in Genesis* 25.4).

As far as the kontakion on Elijah (45) is concerned, we must note—apart from the intricacy already mentioned that involves this text and the Eastern traditions about the prophet—a special relationship between Romanos's kontakion and Basil of Seleukeia's *Or.* 11. Three synoptical comparisons have already been pointed out by Grosdidier de Matons:<sup>28</sup>

45.3.3 ὀλίγοις γὰρ δακρύοις δυσωπεῖται ὁ φιλάνθρωπος· τί οὖν νῦν ἐννοήσω πρὸς τοσαύτην ἀγαθότητα;

Basil of Seleukeia, *Or.* 11.1:149A φοβοῦμαι δ' ὅμως τὸ φιλάνθρωπον τοῦ θεοῦ· οἶδα γὰρ δάκρυσιν ταχέως αὐτὸν πειθόμενον· οἶδα ταῖς ἰκεσίαις καμπτόμενον. τί οὖν ἐργάσομαι; ὅρκω καὶ αὐτὴν τοῦ θεοῦ φιλάνθρωπιαν βιάσομαι.

45.6.4–5 τὰ σπλάγχχνα μὲν ἀνοίγων τοῖς αὐτὸν καθικετεύουσι καὶ σπεύδων πρὸς τὸν ἔλεον, τὸν δὲ προφήτην ἐρυθριῶν καὶ τὸν ὅρκον ὄνπερ ὤμοσε, τοὺς ὁμβρους οὐ δίδωσι.

Basil of Seleukeia, *Or.* 11.1:149C δίδωσι συσχεθεῖς τὴν ἐξουσίαν τῷ Ἠλίᾳ ὁ θεός, οἰκτεῖρων μὲν τοὺς ἀξίως κολαζομένους, ἐντρεπόμενος δὲ τοῦ προφήτου τὸν ζῆλον· ὅφ' ἐκατέρων δὲ συνεχόμενος ὁ τῶν ὅλων δεσπότης τί ποιεῖ;

45.19.2 εἶθε, λέγουσα, τῷ λιμῷ προαπέθανον, πρὶν ἢ σε θεάσομαι

Basil of Seleukeia, *Or.* 11.3:153A εἶθε, φησί, τῷ λιμῷ προαπολοίμην.

The kontakion on the Three Children (46 M.–Tr. = 8 Gr. de M.) displays a double debt to two different patristic traditions on this subject. The exegesis of the Fathers has always seen in this episode a prefiguration of forthcoming events: the angel's descent to bring salvation to the children was understood as a foreshadowing of the Incarnation. Romanos takes his place in this exegetical line together with other writers (Pseudo-Chrysostom, *De tribus pueris* = PG 56:593–600, ascribed to Proklos; Pseudo-Cyril of Alexandria, *De obitu sanctorum trium puerorum et Daniel* = PG 77:1117). But in the first and last strophes our author also mentions the difficult situation of his community: with these hints he shows the

influence of an ancient and distinct exegetical tradition that goes back to Septimius Severus's persecution, when Daniel's book was read as the announcement of troubles for the Church. Major evidence of this trend can be found in Hippolytus's corpus. Romanos shows some connections with it: his reference to the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:15–31) at 46.1.1 is found earlier and more clearly in Hippolytus (*Commentarius in Daniel* 2.32); the words σκοπὸς γὰρ ἡμῖν ἐν τούτῳ μηδὲ λόγου ἀξιῶσαί σε at 46.13.2 can be compared with *Comm. Dan.* 2.24 ἐνδεικνύμενοι ὅτι μηδὲ λόγου τινὸς ἀξίον εἶη τὸ εἶδωλον; the reference to Dan. 3:50 at 46.21.5 (εἰς πνεῦμα δρόσου ἢ φλόξ μεταβληθεῖσα) matches *Comm. Dan.* 2.31 ὁ δὲ ἄγγελος πνεῦμα δρόσου διασυρίζων.

The kontakion on Fasting (51 M.–Tr. = 1 Gr. de M.) corresponds in a number of strophes (6.10.15.16) to Basil of Seleukeia (*Or.* 3.1, 3).<sup>29</sup> Besides, accounting Lenten fasting as the tithe of the year (51.23) refers back to an ancient patristic tradition (see Cassian, *Collationes* 21.24–25). Dorotheos of Gaza (*Doctrinae* 15.1), contemporary with Romanos, probably uses the same source when he makes the same equivalence.<sup>30</sup>

The kontakion on Repentance (52 M.–Tr. = 8b Gr. de M.), concerning the prophet Jonas and Nineveh, also reflects an ancient tradition. On the same subject we can read two sermons written by Basil of Seleukeia (*Or.* 12–13 = PG 85:157–81) and a Chrysostomic one (*Homilia in poenitentiam Niniuitarum* [*poenit. Niniuit.*] = PG 64:424–33), both of which have some points in common with the kontakion. A comparison of Constantinople with Nineveh is assumed in the prooimion: the same comparison is found in the Chrysostomic text (429B); the designation of the king of Nineveh as σοφός (52.6.1) is also found in *poenit. Niniuit.* 429B; the sequence of antithesis in strophe 52.8 is also probably Chrysostomic (*poenit. Niniuit.* 425B); the theme of tears as a gift appreciated by God at 52.2.5–6 is a common topic among the Fathers;<sup>31</sup> the motif expressed in strophe 52.13, Jonas's

29 At 15.7 (σπεύσω πρὸς βρώσιν θεοποιίας) one recognizes also an echo from Proklos, *Or.* 6.16: τῆς βρώσεως τοῦ δένδρου ἐρασθεῖσα [sc. Εὐα], θεοποιῖαν ἐφ'αντάζετο.

30 Pope Gregory the Great (*Hom.* 16.5) uses the same theme: probably he knew it by hearing Romanos's kontakion during his stay in Constantinople.

31 Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.8; Athanasios, *Virg.* 17; Basil of Caesarea, *Hom.* 21.7; Pseudo-Chrysostom, *Hom. in Ps.* 50 3.5 (ὁ Πέτρος, οὐκ ἠρνήσατο τὸν Χριστόν; . . . οὐ πηγὰς δακρύων ἐξέχεε . . . καὶ ἀπεσμήξατο αὐτοῦ τὰ ἁμαρτήματα;—it should be noted that in Romanos's text we

28 Grosdidier de Matons (n. 1 above), footnotes *ad loc.*

lack of forgiveness, also occurs in Basil of Seleukeia, *Or.* 12.2 and in Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarius in Ionam* 24.<sup>32</sup>

Still in the realm of thematic echoes, let us remark finally upon some examples of patristic influence on Romanos's kontakia dedicated to Gospel parables. We shall select from among the more significant ones.

In the first kontakion on the Ten Virgins (47 M.–Tr. = 51 Gr. de M.), in strophes 28–30, preceding the final prayer (strophe 31), the listener is encouraged to practice charity, the queen of virtues. Charity is symbolized—the author says—by the oil of the lamps. In this, Romanos's wording resembles that of two sermons on the same subject, one Chrysostomic (*De poenitentia homilia* = PG 49:291–300), which he seems to know directly, and one pseudo-Chrysostomic (*In decem virgines* = PG 59:527–32): cf. 47.9.1 // *Poenit.*, 3.1; 47.14 // *Dec. virg.* 2; 47.15 // *Poenit.* 3.2; 47.27, 29 // *Poenit.* 3.2.

In the kontakion on the Prodigal Son (49 M.–Tr. = 28 Gr. de M.), from strophe 4 to the end the text corresponds to a pseudo-Chrysostomic sermon on the same subject (*In parabolam de filio prodigo* = PG 59:515–22). This sermon, like the hymn of Romanos, develops only the second section of the Gospel pericope. This text circulated widely in Eastern Christianity: Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Georgian, Arabic, and Slavonic versions are known. I cite a series of details, typical of this kontakion, that are common in Greek patristic literature and are proofs of the popularity that such literature enjoyed: 49.6.2 τὴν χεῖρα δακτυλίῳ καλλωπίσατε τὴν τούτου (cf. Lk. 15:22): the symbolism of the ring presented to the prodigal son, that Romanos develops, is well known among the Fathers, e.g., Titus of Bostra, *Fragmentum in Lc.* 15:22 (δότε . . . δακτύλιον τὸ σημεῖον τῆς πίστεως τὸ κατὰ τὸν διάβολον); Job the Monk, *Quaestio de incarnatione* 5 (τί γὰρ ἂν εἴη σφραγὶς ἢ δακτύλιος, ἀλλ' ἢ τοῦ πνεύματος τὰ δῶρα, καὶ χάρις, καὶ εἰς υἱοθεσίαν ἀνάκλησις); for the calf symbolism (49.8) cf. *Barnabae epistula* 8.2; Cyril of Alexandria, *De adoratione* 3 and his exegesis of the same parable in *Cat. Lc.* 15:23. We notice finally that the allusion to προαίρεσις at 49.20.7 (σὲ τιμῶ, τέκνον μου, ὡς προαιρέσει αἰεὶ με στέρξαντα καὶ θεραπεύσαντα) recalls a reference to it by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* 1.4.1.1) as an essential condition for putting virtue into practice. We

read ἀπέσμηξα in some MSS. at v. 5 instead of the ἀπέπλυνα of modern editions).

32 “I was sent here as a prophet of wrath, not of forgiveness: I am a stiff-necked servant; you are gentle.”

find also a mention of προαίρεσις in John Chrysostom (*De sacerdotio* 2.3). Romanos's attitude is slightly different, because he considers free will as effective as repentance. His view of the matter reflects the exegetical discussion about Romans 9:21 that had occurred in the long interval since the times of Clement and Chrysostom.

The place of the kontakion on the Rich Man and Poor Lazarus (50 M.–Tr. = 30 Gr. de M.) remains vague within the outline we are drawing. Many homilies on this subject are known, written by fourth- and fifth-century authors: Asterios of Amaseia (*Homilia* 1 = PG 40:163–80), John Chrysostom (*De Lazaro* 1–7 = PG 48:963–1054), ‘Eusebios of Alexandria’ (*Sermo* 21 = PG 86:424–52), Pseudo-Chrysostom (*Homilia de eleemosuna* = PG 64:433–44, a reworking of Eusebios). There are resemblances, but we cannot suppose that there is always a close link.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4. The Role of Patristic Tradition in Literary Elaboration

The most substantial and clearest mark of Greek patristic tradition on Romanos's work, as we have already said, is the literary form of his texts. In his lexical choices, in his plays on words, and in many rhetorical devices the Melode usually draws from the linguistic *koiné* that distinguishes the Church Fathers' prose, which in turn is influenced by biblical Greek, filtered through Eastern school praxis.

##### A. Terminology

Romanos usually resorts to the “technical” terminology of the Fathers: this is one of his connotative stylistic features, as shown by the following set of samples.

##### ἄλλότριος

28.19.2 ἔφη τῷ Ἀιδῇ ὁ ἄλλότριος. In Gregory of Nazianzos, *Orationes* 14.27 (= PG 35:896A) and elsewhere, ἄλλότριος is an epithet of the Devil.

33 At 50.7.3–4 Romanos mentions a possible stain on Lazarus's purity (ἕως οὗτο ἀνηρέθη ἡ ἁμαρτία τοῖς πόνοις τοῦ σώματος νῦν ὡς ἐν πυρὶ): the same mention is made also in the Chrysostomic text (*Laz.* 3.5); at 50.18.1 the reference to Gen. 18:1–16 (ἰδοὺ πατέρα φωνεῖς με μὴ γνούς μου τὸ φιλόξενον) is also in “Eusebios of Alexandria,” *Serm.* 21.19.

## ἀπόγνωσις

12.4.4 εἰς ἀπόγνωσιν ταύτην ἐνέβαλλε. ἀπόγνωσις is the “refusal” of an engagement to save oneself, but often is also the “worry” instigated *in primis* by the Devil. See Neilos of Ankyra, *Epistulae* 2.172 (= PG 79:288B): μὴ παραδεξάμενος τὴν ὀλέθριον ἀπόγνωσιν, ὑπαγορευομένην σοι ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου; see also Anthony the Monk, *Hom.* 27 (= PG 89:1520B); John Moschos, *Pratum* 110 (= PG 87:2973C).

## δοξολογία / ἀλληλοῦϊα

At 27.20.1 (ὑπὲρ δὲ τούτων, λυτρωτά, τί ἔχομεν ἀντιδοῦναι, εἰ μὴ τὴν δοξολογίαν;) δοξολογία refers also to the believer’s righteousness, as in John Chrysostom, *Expositio in Psalmum* 148:1 (= PG 55:486).

## δράμα

40.5.3 τὸ δράμα ἀκούσαντες. Here the word δράμα has a particular meaning (“story”), different from its meaning at other occurrences (it usually means “action” and sometimes [21.6.1; 22.6.5; 49.12.7] “bad action”): the meaning “story” is also recorded, for example, in John Chrysostom, *Homilia in 1 Cor.* 22.5 (= PG 61:186).

## ἐγκαυχάομαι

At 11.12.4 (μὴ ἐγκαυχᾶσθω, σωτήρ, ὁ ἐχθρὸς ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ κακίᾳ) the verb ἐγκαυχᾶσθαι is used with a negative meaning (“to boast”): it was discussed by Origen (*Selecta in Ps.* 51:3 = PG 12:1457A: οὐ . . . εἶπε “τί καυχᾶ . . .” ἀλλὰ “τί ἐγκαυχᾶ . . .”. οὐδέποτε δὲ ἐν ἀγαθῷ λέγεται τὸ “ἐγκαυχᾶσθαι”. ἀλλ’ εἰ τις ἀμαρτάνει, ἐγκαυχᾶται . . . φαῦλον μὲν τὸ “ἐγκαυχᾶσθαι,” μέσον δὲ τὸ “καυχᾶσθαι”); like Romanos, Basil of Caesarea also applied it to the Devil (*Regulae brevius tractatae* 247 = PG 31:1248C; *Regulae fusius tractatae* 2.4 = PG 31:916B).

## ἐγκλημα

At 40.1.3 (τρέμω ἐνθυμούμενος τὰ δεινά μου ἐγκλήματα) we find ἐγκλημα used with a meaning different from the traditional one. In classical Greek ἐγκλημα denotes chiefly the “charge,” while in the Fathers’ language it becomes the object of the charge, that is, the crime (see, e.g., John Chrysostom, *Homilia in Mt.* 18:23, 5 = PG 51:25; 26:39, 4 = 51:39): in the quoted passage, Romanos uses the word with this specific meaning.

## καρπός

At 28.22.4 (ἔπου ὁ καρπὸς τῶν ἀγαθῶν προσηλώθη) καρπός is a synonym of πηγὴ: it has a specific sense that does not derive from biblical Greek. An example is found in Theodoret, *Commentarius in Ps.* 68:7 (= PG 80:1404A): τῶν ἐλπίζόντων εἰς σὲ σωτηρίας καὶ οὐκ αἰσχύνῃς καρπὸς ὑπάρχεις.<sup>34</sup>

## καταλαμβάνω

At 27.5.3 (τὸ δὲ σκότος τὸν Χριστὸν καταλαβεῖν οὐδ’ ἐν τῷ σκότει ἐξίσχυσε) it is sure that Romanos interprets καταλαμβάνειν of John 1:5 not as “to understand” or “to receive,” but rather as “to overcome,” as elsewhere in the same Gospel (John 12:35) and in other New Testament passages (Acts 10:34; 25:25; Ephesians 3:18).

## κατήφεια

At 34.22.4 (τῶν δικαίων τε καὶ τῶν ἁγίων τὰ τάγματα ἐν χαρᾷ διαλάμποντα, ἀμαρτωλοὺς δὲ ἐν κατηφείᾳ) we notice an echo from Neilos of Ankyra, *Epistula* 3.213 (= PG 79:480BC) ὅταν ἴδῃς τὴν τῶν δικαίων φαιδρότητα . . . καὶ τὴν τῶν ἀμαρτησάντων κατήφειαν ἐν τῷ σκότῳ ἐκείνῳ τῷ βαθυτάτῳ. The word κατήφεια is intended by Romanos not only as a reference to “darkness” in a figurative sense, but also to “pain” and “sadness,” once again reflecting a patristic usage (Neilos of Ankyra, *Epistula* 3.243 = PG 79:500C; Basil of Seleukeia, *Or.* 12.3 = PG 85:165C, etc.).

## καύχημα

53.19.6 αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τῆς κλίνης σου ὡς καύχημά σου πρόφερε πανταχοῦ, νεοφώτιστε. Cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* 3.9 (= PG 33:440A): ἔχεις καύχημα τοῦ βαπτίσματος αὐτὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ.

## λάκκος

At 9.19.1 (ἰδοὺ ἤντλησαι, γύναι, ἐκ λάκκου ταλαιπωρίας) Psalm 39:3 is quoted with reference to the abyss of sin, in accordance with the Fathers’ usage (see Cyril of Alexandria, *Explanatio in Ps.* 39:1 = PG 69:980B: ἐκ λάκκου ταλαιπωρίας, τουτέστιν ἐκ βάθους ἀμαρτιῶν).

34 The expression καρπὸς τῶν ἀγαθῶν seems unclear to Grosdidier de Matons, so he understands τὰ ἀγαθὰ as a metonymy meaning paradise: Jesus is the fruit of the real tree of life. In the Italian translation cited above in n. 1, I interpreted τῶν ἀγαθῶν as an objective genitive: Jesus is a “fruit” (i.e., a spring) that offers good generously.



### λαμβάνω / ἀπολαμβάνω

At 50.19.5–7 ἀπέλαβες, ἄνθρωπε, ἐν βίῳ τὰ ἀγαθὰ· ὅθεν οὐ κεχρεώστησαι· καὶ Λάζαρος πάντα τὰ κακὰ ἔλαβεν. The reference is to Luke 16:25. Romanos bears in mind a distinction between λαμβάνειν and ἀπολαμβάνειν (“to give back”) with which John Chrysostom is also familiar (*De Lazaro* 3.4 = PG 48:996).

### οἰκονομία

One should also note the specific meaning of οἰκονομία as a synonym of ἐνανθρώπησις at 9.21.3 (συνόμιλον εὖρον τῷ γυναιῖ τὸν ἐλθόντα καὶ τεχθέντα ἐκ παρθένου ἐπὶ γῆς οἰκονομία). This is a specific meaning in patristic literature,<sup>35</sup> especially in Theodoret, *Eranistes* 2 (= PG 83:129C): τὴν ἐνανθρώπησιν δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου καλοῦμεν οἰκονομίαν.

### πολιά

40.11.2 τὰ δὲ τέκνα βακτηρία πολιάς: πολιά is employed with the same meaning and in an identical context by Gregory of Nyssa, *De deitate filii et spiritus sancti* (= PG 46:565D).

### πόρνη

In the Greek text of the kontakion on the Sinful Woman (10 M.–Tr. = 21 Gr. de M.), already in the prooimion (10.pr.I.1: ὁ πόρνην καλέσας θυγατέρα, Χριστὲ ὁ θεός) the woman is called “a harlot” (πόρνη), an epithet not found in the Gospels. Mark and Matthew present the woman as Simon’s wife (thus I would understand the word γυνή without the definite article, according to the Hellenistic custom, in Mark and Matthew); in John she is Mary, Lazarus’s sister; in Luke she is generically “a sinner” (ἁμαρτωλός). A further specification is given by Origen (*Homilia in Ier.* 15.5 = PG 13:436A), who says that the woman, being a harlot (πόρνη), represents converted pagans. The Melode takes his place consciously within this long tradition. The same kontakion, beginning with 10.5.10–11 (συντόμως ἀποτάσσομαι ἐμφυσῶσα τῷ βορβόρῳ τῶν ἔργων μου), displays a sequence of references to the baptismal liturgy: one notices, for instance, employment of the verbs ἀποτάσσω<sup>36</sup> and ἐμφυσάω,<sup>37</sup> both

derived from patristic praxis, as indications to support this reading.

### συνίσταμαι

At 11.12.8 (σῶ γὰρ νεύματι πάντα συνέστη, αἰεὶ δὲ συνίσταται) the verb συνίσταμαι refers to God’s act of creation and is used—in the two forms here combined by Romanos, and with the same meaning—by Athanasios (*De sententia Dionysii* 25 = PG 25:517B; *Contra gentes* 46 = PG 25:93B).

### (σύ)σφιγξίς

12.2.2 παρειμένοις δὲ ἔδωκας σύσφιγξιν, referring to the healing of the paralytic, draws on John Chrysostom, *Homilia in Mt.* 29.2 = PG 57:360: τὴν τοῦ σώματος σφίγξιν ποιεῖται, with the same allusion; σφίγξιν is also the manuscript’s reading in Romanos’s text, corrected to σύσφιγξιν by modern editors for metrical reasons. See also Sophronios of Jerusalem, *Epistula synodica* = PG 87:3176B τῶν παραλύτων ἡ σύσφιγξίς.

### τηγανίζω

50.13.4 ἐνταῦθα νῦν τηγανίζομαι φλογὶ ἀνηλεῶς: τηγανίζομαι is a specific verb used by the Fathers to describe, as here, the destiny of the rich man of the parable burning in hell: see Ephrem the Syrian, *Serm. paraen.* (= 2:93B Ass.); John Chrysostom, *Homilia in Io.* 27.3 (= PG 59:162); *Homilia in Act.* 12.4 = PG 50:104; *Homilia in 2 Cor.* 10.3 (= PG 61:471); Isidore of Pelousion, *Epistula* 1.340 (= PG 78:377B); Maximos the Confessor, *Epistula* 1 (= PG 91:388A). At 50.17.5 (τῇ φλογὶ δεινῶς ὀδυνώμενος ἀποτηγανίζομαι) Romanos uses ἀποτηγανίζομαι: this verb also belongs to the Fathers’ language with reference to the rich man’s destiny (see, e.g., Basil of Caesarea, *Homilia* 1.9 = PG 31:177A: ἀπετηγανίζετο ἐν τῇ φλογὶ τῆς καμίνου, etc.).

### τροπώω

26.10.2 ὅλην γὰρ ἐμοῦ τὴν μορφήν λαβὼν ἐτροπώσατό σε. In patristic language τροπώω typically means the defeat of evil and death because of Jesus: see Eusebios of Caesarea, *Demonstratio evangelica* 4.10 (= PG 22:277C); Athanasios, *Vita Antonii* 42 (= PG 26:905A); *Epistula ad Serapionem* 2.7 (= PG 26:620C); John Chrysostom, *Homilia in Mt.* 78.4 (= PG 58:715).

<sup>35</sup> See references recorded in G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961), s.v. οἰκονομία C.6.b.

<sup>36</sup> See Neilos of Ankyra, *Ep.* 3.287.

<sup>37</sup> See Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatech.*, 9; Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite, *Eccl. hier.* 2.2.6, etc.

### φιλοσοφία

44.1.5 τίνα δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν νοῶμεν; φιλοσοφίαν ὁρῶμεν ταύτην. The connection between φιλοσοφία (often meaning “religious ascesis” in Romanos, derived from 4 Maccabees 1:1) and ἀρετή is common in patristic writings. Similar assertions are found in Theodoret, *Orationes de providentia* 6 (= PG 83:645C): ἀρετὴν μὲν ὀριζόμεθα, φρόνησιν, σωφροσύνην, ἀνδρίαν, δικαιοσύνην καὶ τὰ ἀπὸ τούτων γεννώμενα . . . τῆς φιλοσοφίας μόρια. See also Methodios of Olympos, *Symposium*, proem. (= PG 18:32); Eusebios of Caesarea, *Historia ecclesiastica* 1.2.19; John Chrysostom, *Homilia in 1 Cor.* 29.6 (= PG 61:248), etc.<sup>38</sup>

### B. Metaphors

The influence of the Fathers on Romanos’s style that we are demonstrating is particularly clear in the recurrence of metaphors. We quote a few examples among many.

#### The body as a garment of the soul

The definition of the human body as a garment (ἐνδυμα) of the soul is found at 14.1.6–7 (ἔχει τούτους ὁ φιλόανθρωπος ἀποδύσας τὸ πρόσκαιρον ἐνδυμα, ἵν’ ἐνδύσῃ αἰώνιον σῶμα). It belongs to an ancient tradition: see Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 4.3.8.7; Methodios of Olympos, *Symposium* 2.5, etc. The opposition πρόσκαιρος/αἰώνιος is also found in patristic literature: see, e.g., Irenaios, *Adversus haereses* 5.3.3 (= PG 7:1132A; also comparable with Romanos’s words τῆς προσκαίρου ζωῆς at verse 4); John Chrysostom, *Homilia in Io.* 44.1, etc.<sup>39</sup>

#### Christ as a spring

The metaphor at 9.4.1–2 (Χριστὸς . . . ὁ πηγάζων πνοὴν ζωῆς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις) is very common in the Fathers’ writings (Eusebios of Caesarea, *Demonstratio evangelica* 5.1 = PG 22:356B; Gregory of Nyssa, *Epistula* 5 = PG 46:1032C; etc.). In Romanos its significance is enhanced because it is in harmony with the inspiring motif of his text on the story of the Samaritan woman. The metaphor is embel-

lished by the Melode with a series of alliterations based on the sound *p*: it begins at 9.4.6 (πηγὴ πηγὴν κατέλαβεν ἀποπλύνων) and is intended to highlight precisely this epithet for Christ (for πηγὴ ascribed to Christ, see Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 10 = PG 8:228B; Eusebios of Caesarea, *De ecclesiastica theologia* 1.8 = PG 24:837C).

#### Christ as doctor

There are many passages that represent Jesus as a doctor. The words used by Romanos have suggested to some scholars a hint of possible medical training when the Melode was a young student in Berytus. But the representation of Christ as a doctor has a very old tradition, both Greek (see Clement, *Paedagogus* [*Paed.*] 1.2 = PG 8:256B), and Syriac (see Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymnus Nativitatem* 6.9 = Lamy 2:400).

#### The cross as a plough

At 23.6.6 (γεώργιον κάλλιστον καθαρίζον διάνοιαν) the word γεώργιον, usually meaning “the field” or its products (that is, “the harvest,”) seems here to refer rather to agricultural machinery, i.e., “the plough.” This metaphor is found in Justin, *1 Apologia* 55.3 (= PG 6:412B); Proklos of Constantinople, *Or.* 18.2 (= PG 65:820C); borrowing the meaning “plough” for “γεώργιον” from these references permits a more accurate exegesis.<sup>40</sup>

#### Mary as sky

37.10.2 ὡς ἄλλον πόλον μέλλουσιν γίνεσθαι. This metaphor is often used to refer to Mary. We mention here only Proklos of Constantinople, *Or.* 1.1 = PG 65:681D: Μαρία . . . ἡ παρθένος καὶ οὐρανός. The same image used here by Romanos is found in John of Thessalonike (about one century later than Romanos), *Oratio in dormitionem Mariae* 1.14 (= PO 19:404, 17): θρόνον χειρουβικὸν καὶ οὐρανὸν ἐπίγειον.<sup>41</sup>

#### Mary as unsown earth

49.9.4 τὸν σιτευθέντα ἐξ ἀσπόρου γῆς ἡσπερ ἐπλασε. Cf. Proklos of Constantinople, *Or.* 4.1 (= PG 65:709A): ὦ γῆς ἀσπορον καρπὸν βλαστησάσης οὐράνιον, referring, as in Romanos, to the Virgin.

38 The history of this word and of its meanings is outlined by A.-M. Malingrey, *Philosophia: Étude d’un groupe de mots dans la littérature grecque des Présocratiques au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle après J.-C.* (Paris, 1961). We should note that among pagans the role of temperance in philosophy was stressed since Plato, *Republica* 430E.

39 It is also a leitmotif of the kontakion on the Beheading of John the Baptist (38 M.–Tr.: see the prooimion and the refrain).

40 See Grosdidier de Matons’s (n. 1 above) footnote *ad loc.*

41 A list of patristic passages, some of which are chronologically close to our author, can be found in Lampe, *Patristic Lexicon*, s.v. οὐρανός, 10.c.

### Resurrection as fragrance vs. stink of sinful putrefaction

In the first kontakion on the Raising of Lazarus (mainly 14.13.4 τὴν ὁσφρησιν τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ) the word ὁσφρησις denotes not only “the scent,” but also, metaphorically, the vivifying and transforming power of the Resurrection. We find this metaphor for example in Basil of Seleukeia, *Or.* 4.1 (= PG 85:64D; “Announce to men the freedom from death and the fragrance of resurrection”). Romanos mentions the theme of the opposition between the stink of death and Christ’s scent at 10.1, 3. There are many patristic descriptions of Lazarus’s corpse reassembling itself: I mention here only Amphilokhios of Ikonion, *Or.* 3.3 (= PG 39:65A). Terminology used at 14.12 places this passage within the group of medical descriptions and metaphors for which Romanos has a predilection, and it also suggests the way of reading the depiction of Lazarus’s recomposition that the author expects. The words seem not to refer to the body of a man who died a short time ago, but rather they concentrate our attention on the idea of mankind corrupted by sin.<sup>42</sup> For this reason the author uses verbs referring to putrefaction and incineration; previously also (vv. 4–5 τὰ μέλη . . . μελετᾶ, with a figure of speech) he used a verb recalling ascetical training. Descriptions of “physiological” details in reconstruction of bodies are found in patristic writings on this subject.<sup>43</sup>

### C. Other Figures of Speech

Patristic influence is also noticeable in Romanos’s choice of rhetorical devices. Since he himself is a master of rhetoric, when he turns to a preexistent repertoire, we understand that his purpose is not simply to adopt an essential tool; it is to introduce a conventional sign into his text.

At 1.13.8 we find a polemical theme against the Persians: “The sky-spark of your Son came from the East and led us away from the Persian fire. Leaving that all-consuming fire, we see a fire with flames of dew.”<sup>44</sup> This theme makes use of a biblical model (the story of the

three children), but also of the patristic one that extends the allusion to the Zoroastrian worship of fire: see John Chrysostom, *De statuis* 4.3 (= PG 49:64).<sup>45</sup> It is worth noting that the effectiveness of the theme is increased through the phonetic device of alliteration: ὁ τοῦ παιδίου σου σπινθήρ ἐκ τοῦ πυρός τοῦ Περσικοῦ.

From a rhetorical point of view we should examine the first strophe of the kontakion on the Presentation in the Temple (4 M.–Tr. = 14 Gr. de M.). It contains the “cipher key” of the whole text, intended not to represent dramatically the commemorated event but to illuminate its theological implications:

ὁ τὸν Ἀδὰμ γὰρ δημιουργήσας βαστάζεται ὡς βρέφος·  
ὁ ἀχώρητος χωρεῖται ἐν ἀγκάλαις τοῦ πρεσβύτου·  
ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν κόλπων τῶν ἀπεριγράπτων  
ὑπάρχων τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ  
ἐκὼν περιγράφεται σαρκί, οὐ θεότῃτι.

We note a complicated chiasmic construction: ὁ ἀχώρητος χωρεῖται is connected with τῶν ἀπεριγράπτων . . . περιγράφεται (two *figurae etymologicae* with oxymoron), ἐν ἀγκάλαις is connected with ἐπὶ τῶν κόλπων, while τοῦ πρεσβύτου is paired with τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ. The purpose is to present from the very beginning in a solemn and ornate way the perfect unity of Christ’s two natures. To achieve this result, the Melode applies not only pagan but also patristic rhetorical tradition, which supplies to rhetorical technique the required depth. So verse 6,

ὁ ἀχώρητος χωρεῖται ἐν ἀγκάλαις τοῦ πρεσβύτου

can be compared with Pseudo-Cyril of Jerusalem, *In occursum Domini* 7 (= PG 33:119A): ὁ κατέχων τὴν γῆν πᾶσαν δρακὶ ἀγκάλαις πρεσβύτου χωρεῖται, καὶ βαστάζεται ὁ φέρων τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, and verse 8,

ἐκὼν περιγράφεται σαρκί, οὐ θεότῃτι

can be compared with Pamphilos of Jerusalem, *Panoplia dogmatica* 6.1 (= p. 615 Mai):<sup>46</sup> ὁ Χριστὸς περιγραπτὸς μὲν

42 See the remarks of M. B. Cunningham, “Andreas of Crete’s Homilies on Lazarus and Palm Sunday: The Preacher and His Audience,” *StP* 31 (1997): 38.

43 Cunningham, “Andreas of Crete’s Homilies,” 36 and nn. 84–85. See, e.g., the third pseudo-Chrysostomic homily *In Lazarum* (PG 62:777–80), actually a part of Hesychios’s second homily on the same subject.

44 Trans. Schork, *Sacred Song* (n. 10 above), 55.

45 And still later Bede, *Libri IV in principium Genesis*, note to Gen. 11:31 = 166 s. ed. C. W. Jones (Turnhout, 1967) = CCSL 118/A: “Since in the Hebrew language *ur* means ‘fire,’ (Abraham) came out from the Chaldean fire, from the land where fire was worshipped, that is to say: ‘from the Chaldean idolatry.’”

46 *Nova patrum Bibliotheca* 2 (Rome, 1844).

ἔστι κατὰ τὸ σῶμα, ἀπερίγραφτος δὲ κατὰ τὴν θεότητα. The work of Pamphilos, who was contemporary with Romanos, meets the apologetic and polemical demands borne in mind by the Melode.

In the same kontakion, strophe 13 holds the middle place in the sequence of stanzas, seen by Romanos as a key position:

Τοσοῦτον δὲ τὸ μυστήριον ἀντιλέγεται, ὅτι τῇ  
διανοίᾳ σου  
γενήσεται ἀμφισβήτησις·  
καὶ γὰρ ὅταν ἴδῃς τῷ σταυρῷ προσηλούμενον τὸν υἱόν  
σου, ἀμώμητε,  
μεμνημένη τῶν λόγων, ὧν εἶπεν ὁ ἄγγελος, καὶ τῆς θείας  
συλλήψεως  
καὶ τῶν θαυμάτων τῶν ἀπορρήτων εὐθέως ἀμφιβάλλεις·  
ὡς ῥομφαία δέ σοι ἔσται ἡ διάκρισις τοῦ πάθους.  
Ἀλλὰ μετὰ ταῦτα ἴασιν ταχεῖαν ἐκπέμψει τῇ  
καρδίᾳ σου  
καὶ τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ εἰρήνην ἀήττητον  
ὁ μόνος φιλόανθρωπος.

The strophe's main theme is doubt (ἀμφισβήτησις . . . ἀμφιβάλλεις), which will be resolved by Christ's final intervention. Romanos triply emphasizes the motif: he uses a chiasmus (vv. 7–8, joined with a parallelism: ἴασιν ταχεῖαν / εἰρήνην ἀήττητον) and a reference to the Gospel (v. 6 ὡς ῥομφαία δέ σοι ἔσται ἡ διάκρισις τοῦ πάθους: cf. Luke 2:35), and he also turns to a patristic model, namely Origen, *Homilia in Luc.* 17 (= PG 13:1842–47).<sup>47</sup>

The kontakion on the Sinful Woman discussed above obviously includes perfumes among its leitmotifs. The Melode does not fail to emphasize this theme in the opening lines (10.1.1–2): τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ Χριστοῦ καθάπερ ἀρώματα ραινόμενα πανταχοῦ βλέπων ἡ πόρνη. The words ῥήματα, ἀρώματα, and ραινόμενα are linked by assonance and alliteration: the sound *r* characterizes verse 1 and the beginning of 2, then it is replaced by the sound *p*. But rhetorical devices are once more interwoven in a fashion reminiscent of patristic writings that connect perfumes with the idea of chastity: see Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.8 (= PG 8:465B); Methodios of Olympus, *Symposium* 7.1 (= PG 18:148C).

The kontakion on the Entry into Jerusalem in many sections shows itself to be following the scheme of a λόγος

βασιλικός. In two particularly intense passages the author uses rhetorical devices derived from patristic models. At 16.2.3 (ὁ Λόγος ἐπὶ ἄλογον λογικοὺς θέλων ῥύσασθαι) Romanos draws from Proklos of Constantinople (*Or.* 9.2 = PG 65:773BC) a *figura etymologica* in three parts that plays a leading role in the Greek text and is consonant with the devices marking this strophe. The etymology suggested at 16.8.5 (ὠσαννά, κραζόντων, ὃ ἔστι σωσον δὴ) is derived from Origen, *Comm. in Mt.* 16.19 (τὰ ἀντὶ τοῦ “ὦ κύριε, σωσον δὴ,” . . . ἐβραϊκῶς ἐκκεῖσθαι ἐν τῷ “ὠσαννά τῷ υἱῷ Δαυῖδ”): it is used as a starting point for a sequence of variations and developments in the following verses.

Our last example is drawn from the kontakion on Pentecost (33 M.–Tr. = 49 Gr. de M.). At 16.3 (οἱ τὸ πρῶτον καταρράπτοντες τὰ δίκτυα νῦν πλοκάς ρητόρων λύουσιν) we find a scriptural image (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19) based on the wordplay δίκτυα (“nets”) / πλοκάς (“complicated sentences,” “syllogism”). The same wordplay is found in the *Akathistos Hymn* (17.12–13). In both cases the source is John Chrysostom, *Homilia in Act.* ap. 4.3 (= PG 60:45–47). So we can observe once more a synthesis of biblical theme, rhetorical technique, and patristic elaboration.

## Conclusion

Examination of the data presented above allows the formulation of some provisional inferences. First of all, one can ascertain that Romanos is aware of belonging to a definite tradition, namely Church oratory in the service of catechesis, and he is therefore provided with all literary adornments available through earlier formulations in Greek and Syriac. The Melode derives from this tradition some of his leading themes, but particularly many of his typical features—vocabulary, rhetorical devices, and commonplaces. Second, we note that Romanos's use of the legacy from the Fathers is seldom “bookish.” Patristic echoes in his texts come predominantly from the common heritage of the Church preachers of his time: we find expressions, clichés, and didactic devices often used by preachers of the fourth and fifth centuries and still circulating at the time of Justinian.

The reworking of preexisting texts also seems to be one of his catechetical devices, but the extent and consistency of such a practice cannot be stated precisely at present. There is still great uncertainty about the identity

<sup>47</sup> Quoted by Grosdidier de Matons (n. 1 above), footnote *ad loc.* (where Pseudo-Chrysostom, *Occurs. Dom.* = PG 50:811 is added).

of most of Romanos's "sources." Apart from the problems concerning the whole corpus of the Greek Ephraem and the vast pseudo-Chrysostomic tradition, we have mentioned the enduring uncertainty about the attribution of some texts that are preserved under the names of Proklos, Basil of Seleukeia, and "Eusebios of Alexandria."

To such doubts about authorship we must add the uncertain chronology of some texts that can as surely be compared with those of Romanos. It will be sufficient to quote here the case of the *kontakion* on Fasting (51). This text, as already stated, agrees synoptically with a text transmitted under the name of John Chrysostom (*Hom. de poenit.* 5 = PG 49:305ff.). Let us compare strophe 2 of the *kontakion* with the corresponding Chrysostomic passage:

Romanos, 51.2:

ὅτι μεγάλοι ἐν ἔργοις ἦσαν Μωσῆς καὶ Ἡλίας οἱ πύργοι  
 πύργοι γινώσκομεν,  
 ὅτι καὶ πρῶτοι ἐν προφήταις τυγχάνουσιν.  
 πρὸς θεὸν παρρησίαν ἐκέκτηντο,  
 ὅτι περ ἐβούλοντο προσιέναι καὶ δέεσθαι  
 καὶ αὐτῷ διαλέγεσθαι πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον,  
 ὃ ὑπάρχει θαυμαστόν τε καὶ παράδοξον.  
 ὁμῶς καὶ οὕτως πρὸς τὴν νηστείαν  
 κατέφευγον σπουδαίως διὰ ταύτης αὐτῷ προσαγόμενοι.

John Chrysostom, *Poenit.* 5:

καὶ γὰρ Μωϋσῆς καὶ Ἡλίας, οἱ πύργοι τῶν ἐν τῇ Παλαιᾷ  
 προφητῶν,  
 καίτοι καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων ὄντες λαμπροὶ καὶ μεγάλοι,  
 καὶ πολλὴν ἔχοντες παρρησίαν,  
 ὅτε ἐβούλοντο προσελθεῖν τῷ θεῷ καὶ διαλεχθῆναι,  
 ὡς ἀνθρώπων δυνατὸν ἦν,  
 πρὸς ταύτην [sc. νηστείαν] κατέφευγον,  
 καὶ διὰ ταύτης αὐτῷ προσεφέροντο χειρῶν.

The comparison displays an actual interdependency. The same remark can be made about strophe 5:

Romanos, 51.5:

αὐτὸς γὰρ ὡς μητρὶ φιλοστόργῳ νηστείας ἐντολῇ ὁ  
 φιλόανθρωπος πρῶην

παρέθετο ὡς διδασκάλῳ παραχθέντα τὸν ἄνθρωπον  
 ἐν χερσὶν αὐτῆς παραδοὺς τὴν ζωὴν αὐτοῦ.  
 καὶ εἰ ταύτην ἔστερξε, μετ' ἀγγέλων ἠύλιζέτο.  
 ἀθετήσας δὲ εὗρετο πόνους καὶ τὸν θάνατον,  
 ἀκανθῶν δὲ καὶ τριβόλων τὴν τραχύτητα  
 καὶ ἐπιμόχθου βίου τὴν θλίψιν.

John Chrysostom, *Poenit.* 5:

διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον ποιῶν ἐξ ἀρχῆς,  
 εὐθέως αὐτὸν ταῖς τῆς νηστείας φέρων παρεκατέθετο  
 χερσίν,  
 ὥσπερ φιλοστόργῳ μητρὶ καὶ ἀρίστῃ διδασκάλῳ  
 τὴν ἐκείνου σωτηρίαν ἐγχειρίζων αὐτῇ  
 ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ ταύτης παρήκουσε,  
 διὰ τοῦτο θάνατος καὶ φροντίδες καὶ πόνοι καὶ ἀθυμίαι  
 καὶ ζωὴ θανάτου παντὸς βαρυτέρα.  
 διὰ τοῦτο ἀκανθαὶ καὶ τρίβολοι,  
 διὰ τοῦτο πόνοι καὶ ὠδῖνες καὶ βίος ἐπιμόχθος.

But the direction of the reworking remains uncertain. In fact, it is equally possible that Romanos elaborated the existent prose source or that an anonymous paraphraser set down Romanos's strophes in prose. Romanos's indebtedness to his forerunners will be identified only when we have at our disposal critical editions and critical research, which will also make it possible to recognize his role as a model for later reworkings, not only in hymnographic form but also in prose.

Even at present, though, we can perceive Romanos's aptitude—as a rhetorician writing rhythmic strophes—for including the rich legacy of language and style from the Greek Fathers among his literary devices for didactic and paraenetic purposes, together with biblical models and rhetorical classical technique. The Melode appears not only as an heir and user of this legacy, but also as a major spreader and renewer of it.

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